

**A Statement by Archbishop John Privett, Metropolitan of the Anglican Church in BC and Yukon, to the National Event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
Vancouver, BC September 21, 2013**

I am privileged to stand today with Elder Charon Spinks from the congregation of St. Mary-St. Paul in Lytton and a member of the Interior Salish Nation. Many from our church have been here this week and I invite those of you present today to stand for a moment.

I am honoured to speak to you today. There is so much I want to say but I will do my best to respect the 3 minute guideline for our presentation. I acknowledge that we gather at this time on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people and the five nations of this beautiful land. I am grateful for the generous welcome we have all received from the elders and chiefs of this territory. I want to express my deep respect and appreciation for the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and my admiration for the leadership of Commissioners Murray Sinclair, Wilton Littlechild and Marie Wilson. Most importantly I want to honour all the school survivors who have courageously shared their stories with us this week. You have touched me personally and powerfully and I will carry many of your words in my heart for a long, long time.

I have been deeply moved by the experiences that have been shared by so many individuals and the accounts that have been written about the history of residential schools in this country. In all honesty, some of the testimonies I have heard have cut to my heart like a sharp sword. I have heard you speak of your experience of the painful separation from parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters and children. I have heard you speak for those who are no longer here to speak for themselves but whose memories you carry with you every day. I have listened with the ear of my heart to your experiences of immense loneliness, fear and confusion and most painful of all I have heard your stories of widespread abuse. The telling has been painful, and it has been painful to listen, but your stories need to be told and we in the church and all Canadians need to hear them. What happened to you was wrong. Your truth telling has and is making an enormous impact. I have been shocked, saddened, and shamed by this legacy and the part our church has played in it. I echo the words of our Primate in 1993 when on behalf of our whole church he presented our apology. I am so deeply sorry for the suffering that our church has caused in your lives, in your families across generations and in your communities. Words fall short of what I want to say. I know we cannot undo the past, but what we do now can shape a better future.

I know that words of apology are not enough. An apology is just one step along the path to reconciliation – a path which in the end is the work of the Spirit – a sacred journey which is unfolding in the Creator’s time. With humility and respect our church is committed to taking concrete steps in this journey. We are committed to a process of restoring right relationships and laying the foundation for a new future. Our Church has repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery and endorsed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. We are seeking deeper understanding through the Aboriginal Neighbours project. Individuals in congregations across this Province have knit prayer shawls to be given to those who have bravely shared their stories of survival and in so doing have surrounded you with prayer. We have chosen to walk into the future in the development of a self-governing indigenous church and we have welcomed Mark MacDonald as our National Indigenous Anglican Bishop. At our Joint Assembly in Ottawa this July we celebrated the establishment of a new indigenous diocese in Northern Ontario. And this summer our Senior Archbishop called for the establishment of a commission to help us deepen the work of reconciliation. We have learned a great deal from you, and we still have much more to learn.

We have two symbols for the Bentwood box. As one sign of our commitment to the healing process we present a prayer shawl knit by a person in one of our churches. It was made with love and woven with prayer. It represents our continuing prayers for survivors and a concrete sign that what happened to you matters to us.

We would also like to present a wool baby blanket with the symbol of the sea wolf-whale who sings a song of history. It is a sign of our commitment to the work of Truth and Reconciliation. This blanket is first of all, a symbol of the children who did not have the comfort and safety of home and the love of family in the residential schools; it is also a sign of the prayers of our church for continued healing which now surround the many survivors; and it is a sign of our hope and prayer that the children yet unborn may be welcomed into a new community, a new land, of mutual respect and right relationships.

When I was a little boy I played in the home of a Gwich’n priest and his wonderful wife. They were beautiful people and they tried to teach me some Gwich’n words. I still remember some of them so I close with - Ma Si Cho – A big thank you for the privilege of sharing this time together.